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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3051
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7704
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6637
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2135
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 7912
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 3943
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2467
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 3193
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 004761

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2017

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SUBJECT: MGPK01: SITREP 09, AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD: HUMAN
RIGHTS ACTIVISTS RELEASED; PARTIES PLAN PROTESTS; ARRESTS
CONTINUE

REF: ISLAMABAD 4754

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Following Mission and Department intervention, 54 members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan were released November 7 morning from house arrest, and charges against them have been dropped. People's Party (PPP) leader Benazir Bhutto, upon arriving in Islamabad November 6, has called for her party to protest the state of emergency and reportedly called off plans to meet with President Musharraf. There were protests in several provincial capitals late November 6, resulting in more lawyers' and politicians' arrests. It is calm in most cities but additional lawyer and political party demonstrations are scheduled for Islamabad and other cities. Media curbs remain in place. The UK has echoed our call on Musharraf to schedule parliamentary elections and to resign as Chief of Army Staff (COAS). Mission offices continue to function normally. End summary.

¶2. (C) With Mission and Department intervention, CG Lahore reports that all 54 members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, who were arrested November 4, have been released from house arrest. The government has dropped all charges against the activists.

¶3. (C) People's Party (PPP) leader Benazir Bhutto November 6 returned to Islamabad for the first time since she ended her self-imposed exile on October 18. She has called on party supporters to gather in front of the Parliament at 1600 today to protest Musharraf's imposition of emergency. Despite earlier indications she would meet with Musharraf upon arrival, Bhutto announced upon arrival that such a meeting would not/not take place. Following Bhutto's announcement that the November 9 Rawalpindi rally would be an opposition rally, the GOP banned the rally.

¶4. (C) PPP National Assembly member (MNA) Syed Nayyar Ali Bokhari confirmed that Bhutto ordered her members to boycott the legislative session called for 1700. The Ambassador is scheduled to meet with Bhutto at 1900.

¶5. (U) The opposition All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) has called for country-wide demonstrations for November 9. All associated parties are set to participate, including

Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), according to its Senator Rahat Hussain. The demonstrations would commence in all district capitals after Friday prayers. APDM party leaders will confirm these plans at their November 8 meeting in Islamabad.

¶6. (SBU) In some cities (Gujranwala, Multan, Sargodha, Nowshera), lawyers continue to be arrested.

¶7. (C) Opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf coordinator Saifullah Khan Nyazee confirmed press reports that his party's leader Imran Khan "escaped" from police custody. Khan was being kept at a house deputized as a "sub-jail." Khan is now in hiding but is giving TV interviews.

¶8. (C) A new 9-justice Supreme Court met yesterday for the first time and overturned the November 3 decision declaring the emergency law illegal. The November 3 decision had been made hastily by the former Chief Justice and six other justices just before they were arrested. Today, the Supreme Court heard routine cases. According to a Court source, the petitions by presidential contenders Wajihuddin Ahmed and Makhdoom Amin Faheem challenging Musharraf's re-election will be taken up (again) on November 12. The hearing, set to last two days at most, will likely end in a "dismissal of the petitions." Post is watching this carefully since it may be used as a possible reason to delay elections. No date has been set for the reconstituted bench to hear arguments against the October 5 National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO).

Peshawar

¶9. (C) Late November 6, CG Peshawar reports about 200

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supporters of the Pashto nationalist parties marched through Peshawar and burned Musharraf in effigy. (The parties claim upto 700 protested.) The crowd was dispersed, according to Awami National Party (ANP) sources, by baton-charging police. Several ANP leaders were arrested.

¶10. (U) Today (November 7), approximately 15-20 lawyers have set up camp inside Peshawar's High Court, reportedly on a hunger strike.

Karachi

¶11. (C) The Sindh Home Secretary reported to CG Karachi that 489 lawyers and political workers have so far been arrested across the province for maintenance of public order; 336 of these were arrested in Karachi alone on November 6.

¶12. (C) CG Karachi also reports that a number of lawyers, including Balochistan Bar Association president, were arrested late November 6 in Quetta during a protest against the imposition of emergency.

Media Freedoms

¶13. (C) Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi informed CG Lahore late Nov 6 that cable operators will be permitted to retransmit international news channels "in the next few days." Pakistani news channels, however, will reportedly only be permitted back on the air if they agree to abide by the new Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) code of conduct.

International Actions/Reactions

¶14. (C) UK High Commissioner Robert Brinkley advised the Ambassador late Nov 6 that UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband had called Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Foreign Minister Mian Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, and former Prime

Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Miliband's message reportedly mirrored that of the USG: schedule elections and make the transition to civilian democratic rule. Brinkley was set to see Bhutto on November 7 in Islamabad.

PATTERSON